

KYP

KEEPING YOU POSTED

PROCESSED

MAR 13 1998

GTJ LIBRARY

Headline news for busy
church editors

UCC on the Web: www.ucc.org

The UCC Office of Communication:

'Connecting the Gospel and Justice to Media, Churches and Community'

November 1997

Here is the Good News of the United Church of Christ, **especially edited for congregational publications**, with topical news of the wider church, helpful hints to strengthen members' faith and pride in the denomination and personal testimonies to stir the spirit. **Each story is short and complete and can stand alone, ready to drop into the weekly bulletin or the monthly newsletter.** The code at the end of some entries refers interested readers to a more comprehensive story in *United Church News*.

98,679 HOURS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE — Here's a great church anniversary project. Sign up members to perform as many hours of community service equal to the church's age, and provide a list of projects. Think what that would mean to the tiny town of West Barnstable on Cape Cod. The 259 parishioners of **West Parish of Barnstable UCC** would each be eligible to give 381 hours of service. The church was founded in 1616. That would be a total of 98,679 hours, 12,334 eight hour days, 30,840-hour work weeks or almost six years. Wow! What a place to live in.

MAY I QUOTE YOU? — "As we gather to celebrate Ridgeview's 96th anniversary, we have a choice. We can look back to what we were, or we can look ahead to what we can be. If we choose to look back, we may not make it to 100. If, on the other hand we choose to look forward, we surely will make it many more years. The choice belongs to each of us. Which will it be?

— *Our thanks to Wilton S. Haffey, Jr., pastor, Ridgeview UCC, White Plains, N.Y.*

JUVENILE JUSTICE: SNAKE OR FISH? — Pick up any tabloid newspaper and you'll read about kids out of control. One solution for juvenile delinquents is to get tough. Lock 'em up and throw away the key. That's the philosophy behind the Violent and Repeat Juvenile Offender Act, U.S. Senate bill 10.

It's the wrong solution to the problem, says the Rev. Patrick Conover of the UCC's Office for Church in Society in Washington, D.C. It "aims at scapegoating some of the least attractive children in our society," he says in urging its defeat. He says the bill would endanger children by jailing them with adults, unreasonably permit the jailing of truants, runaways and others who have committed no crimes and offer no positive alternatives for children whom schools would expel for drug, alcohol or tobacco possession. There are certain times when children who repeatedly break the law should be punished, says Conover. But, quoting Jesus' words from Luke 11:11 ("Is there a father among you who would offer his son a snake when he asks for a fish?"), he adds, "Just because it is harder to work with some children than others, we do not have the moral right or the social duty to cast the children aside as worthless or to torment them with 'snakes.'" The bill has been languishing in the Senate since it came out of committee July 24.

JESUS IN CYBERSPACE — You never know what you're going to find when you surf the Internet. Punch in [<http://www.firstcong.org>](http://www.firstcong.org) and a brightly colored page with children's handwriting jumps onto your screen.

"Kids to Kids Challenge Questions and Answers about Jesus," entices the headline. Click on some icons about Jesus, his birth, growing up, temptations and a series of questions pops up. You can check your answer with the correct one, look at kids' art with 3-D glasses. (If you don't have any, the web site sponsor will send you a pair free.)

You can also chat with the sponsor via e-mail. And who is the sponsor? It's the church school of **First Congregational UCC, Des Plaines, Ill.**, who surely must have the world's first children's church school home page, designed by the kids themselves.

How's it doing amid all the other clutter of cyberspace? "We're averaging about 100 hits [visits] a week," says Jo Ann Dibbern, director of Christian education, and she reports e-mail from Canada, Switzerland, Australia and Singapore. Only one call for 3-D glasses, though.

CAN YOU TOP THIS? — Two couples at **The United Church of Christ, Sun City, Calif.**, together celebrated wedding anniversaries totaling 137 years of married life. See if your church can top that and hold an "Order for Renewal of the Marriage Covenant" service from the UCC's *Book of Worship*.

CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME? — It certainly appears so in the UCC. For every dollar members put in the plate, 89.9 cents stays right in the community, paying for the minister's salary, light bulbs, repairs, in-house missions like soup kitchens and local charities. Do the math, and you'll see that leaves about a dime for mission beyond the local church.

The conference retains 2.8 cents for its work, while 2.4 cents goes for special offerings and appeals, some at the conference level and others at the national setting, such as One Great Hour of Sharing, Neighbors in Need and the Pension Boards' Christmas Fund. Only 1.8 cents finds its way for the mission and ministry carried out by the UCC's 11 national agencies.

-- Statistics from the financial insert in the Fall 1997 issue of Connections, a publication of the Stewardship Council

'MERRY CHRISTMAS, REVEREND' — The Advent season is one of the most hectic times in the Christian calendar for clergy, and then come the January blahs. Here's a great way to say "thanks" to your pastor and recharge her or his spiritual batteries. Make time and money available to send your clergyperson to the annual UCC Parish Ministry gathering in sunny Florida.

It's a great way to see old friends, learn some new tricks — the theme this year is "Pastor as Artist: Finding Your Way" — and maybe get in a little R&R. Some 500 ministers trekked South last year and returned refreshed and a little sunburned. Dates this year are Jan. 5-9. Contact the Rev. Robert Alward, (941) 642-8653.



Keeping You Posted is edited by William C. Winslow and produced monthly by the UCC Office of Communication, 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115-1100. Visit us on

the Web at <<http://www.ucc.org>>.

Send story ideas to: William C. Winslow, UCC Office of Communication, 475 Riverside Dr., 16th fl., New York, NY 10115; e-mail: <winsloww@ucc.org>.

THE CLERICAL SAFETY NET — Ministers are probably the last people in the world to admit that occasionally they need financial help. But some do, and the UCC Pension Boards' annual Christmas Fund appeal is a prime source of such aid. So, who is in need? Usually older retirees whose churches, often pre-UCC, could only afford a meager pension plan, nothing like the 14 percent most churches subscribe to today. And sometimes, ministers who have not yet retired who have emergency financial needs. So, when a pastor or spouse is suddenly hit with an unexpected bill, such as hospital stays or extra fuel for a cold snap, they look to the Christmas Fund for a little something to tide them over.

Dec. 21 is Christmas Fund offering Sunday. Resource materials have already been sent to every church. Who knows when your pastor may have an emergency down the retirement road?

7-UP COMMUNION — When Suzanne Stanfield stumbled off the plane in New Delhi, she was overwhelmed. The heat, the crowds, unfamiliar territory. It was a struggle just to get to her hostel. It was also just before Sunday, and as a voluntary missionary with the Common Global Ministries of the UCC/Disciples, she wanted to find an English speaking Protestant church and celebrate communion, which Disciples do every Sunday. Christian churches, of course, are not exactly on every street corner in India and under the circumstances, nothing turned up.

So she improvised. She dug out her Bible, a sermon from home, a can of 7-Up and a saltine cracker and headed for a little park she had spotted near the hostel. "It was a beautiful setting," she recalls, even though she missed the communal sharing of the Lord's Supper.

OH NO! — How to make your church user-friendly for those who have excuses not to come:

1. Install cots in the foyer for those claiming Sunday as their only day to sleep in.
2. Provide steel helmets for those who claim the roof will fall in the day they ever visit a church.
3. Distribute blankets for those who claim the sanctuary is too cold or fans for those who think it too hot.
4. Provide hearing aids for those who complain the pastor speaks too softly and cotton for those who think the preaching is too loud.
5. Put score cards in each pew to accommodate those who wish to list the hypocrites present.
6. Fill the sanctuary with relatives for those who like to visit on Sunday.
7. Provide TV dinners for those who say they can't go to church and cook Sunday dinner at the same time.
8. Put a couple of potted palms in one section for those who claim they can only seek God in nature.
9. Decorate the church with both Christmas poinsettias and Easter lilies for those who have never seen the church without them.

— Seen on "Eculough," a meeting on UCChristNet